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SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE GRANTED FOR STAFFDEL PEVZNER'S TRIP TO RUSSIA MAY 24-26, 2008

REF: STATE 50452

¶1. Embassy welcomes and grants country clearance to Staffdel Pevzner's visit to Russia from May 24-26, 2008.

¶2. Control Officer in Moscow is Margaret Hawthorne, tel. (7-495) 728-5347; (7-495) 234-2395 (hm); (7-495) 410-3088 (cell); E-mail is HawthorneMD@state.gov.

¶3. Control Officer will meet and assist upon arrival in Moscow on May 24, 2008.

¶4. Reservations are confirmed at the Hotel Metropol: 1/4, Teatralny proezd; telephone (7- 499) 501-7800; fax (7- 499) 501-7810. The daily rate is within per diem for Moscow and breakfast is included. Reservations can be cancelled 24 hours before the arrival time without incurring charges.

¶5. We have received confirmation of your security clearances and have added your names to the Embassy's access list. TDYers should bring their valid Main State GLID (aka "SMART") badge to facilitate compound access.

¶6. Weather: Temperatures in Moscow and St. Petersburg in May vary from 40-85 degrees, with rain possible; spring clothing is recommended.

¶7. Visa requirements: All visitors must have a valid entry/exit visa for Russia and may not enter Russia before (or depart Russia after) the dates shown in the visa. Please note that the dates on Russian visas are listed in day/month/year format. If in Washington, please allow a minimum of fourteen (14) working days, up to a maximum of twenty (20) working days for Russian visa processing. If applying in another country, please allow a minimum of twenty (20) working days. Visa extensions and other amendments requested after arrival normally take ten to fifteen days to process. To minimize the number of emergency requests for extensions and other amendments after your arrival, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggests that initial visa applications include a five-day cushion on each side of your planned travel dates. For instance, if you plan to arrive June 5 and depart June 25, you should request a visa that is valid for the entire month of June. Please carefully check the dates of the visa before entering the country; travelers arriving before or after the validity dates on their visas will be detained at the airport and may be deported to their original embarkation points.

¶8. Passport/visa registration/migration cards: All visitors who remain in Russia for more than three business days must register their passports and visas with the Russian government. The registration authority is given to hotels. Visitors not staying at hotels should register their passports/visas through the Embassy Human Resources office; this process takes approximately two business days.

Migration Card for all travelers: Russian authorities have implemented a migration (entry/exit) card system at all border crossings. This is in addition to the visa regime. All visitors to

Russia must complete a migration card, which is handed out upon arrival in Russia - either on airplanes or at border crossings.

Travelers must complete the migration card. There are five steps to this process (1) Obtain a migration card upon entry to Russia, (2) complete the card, (3) ensure the card is stamped by border officials upon entry, (4) register the card at each hotel during the stay, and (5) keep the card with the passport. If travelers are stopped by police or militia, they must produce a passport, valid visa and stamped migration card. Upon departure from Russia, travelers will relinquish this migration card to border police.

¶9. Customs: Russian customs procedures include entry and exit declaration forms. The new law on currency regulation and control allow foreigners to export up to USD 3,000 without providing a customs declaration or proof of how the money was obtained.

However, foreigners may also export up to USD 10,000 by simply filling out a customs declaration upon exit. More than USD 10,000 can be exported upon proof that it was imported into Russia legally (a stamped customs declaration or proof of a legal bank or wire transfer). TDY employees and official visitors should abide by these rules, as they may have only limited diplomatic immunity.

¶10. Export prohibitions: TDY employees and official visitors should be aware that art (antiquities, paintings, samovars, icons, etc.) may not be taken out of Russia without advance written permission from the Ministry of Culture. Visitors planning to purchase art objects or antiques while in Russia should first check with the GSO office on export requirements.

¶11. Security situation: Recent incidents occurring within Russia, to include the August 31 explosion outside a Moscow metro station involving apparent suicide bombers and the hostage taking in

Southern Russia; have highlighted the continued risk of terrorist activity. The U.S. Embassy is not aware of any credible or specific information that American citizens or U.S. interests in Russia are targets of this terrorist activity. Nonetheless, the risk of an American citizen being an unintended victim of these attacks does exist. The Embassy advises American citizens traveling or living in Russia that the potential for terrorist actions, including actions against civilians, is currently high and is likely to remain so for some time.

Crime in Russia remains at a high level and often is directed against westerners. The types of crime reported range from petty theft, primarily from hotel rooms and train compartments; street crime involving pickpockets or bands of street children also is common. Theft involving the capture of electronic ATM and credit card data also has risen in recent months.

When traveling in and around Moscow, please remain vigilant at all times. Exercise good judgment and the utmost discretion when using any form of public transportation. If you are transiting via train, plane or bus, please make sure you provide a friend or coworker with your travel schedule, so that you can be accounted for at all times. Avoid large crowds and public gatherings that lack enhanced security measures. If you are out in public, we recommend that you carry a cell phone, with important telephone numbers to include the Marine Security Guard Post 1 (728-5025).

The human and technical intelligence threat in Russia remains a major concern. All non-USG facilities, including hotels, are considered compromised and classified material cannot be stored, discussed or processed in them.

¶12. Currency exchange: Russia has a predominantly cash economy, with the Russian ruble as the only legal tender for local transactions. Rubles (and dollars, if needed) may be obtained from bank ATMs that are connected to the PLUS and CIRRUS systems using your U.S. debit/credit cards. Credit cards are accepted and may be safely used at major hotels, restaurants, and shopping centers. RSO recommends against using credit/debit cards for small purchases or in stand-alone ATM (those not physically located at a bank), as credit/debit card data theft is an ongoing problem. Dollar cash may be exchanged at numerous banks and exchange houses throughout the city. Additionally, Citibank has an exchange facility at the Embassy and will provide accommodation exchange for USG official

visitors and USG contractors, upon presentation of travel orders and a photo ID. Official visitors may also obtain U.S. dollars or local currency upon presentation of travelers' checks or a valid personal check drawn on an U.S. bank account. Please note that Citibank is only able to accept American Express traveler's checks at this time.

There are also two Citibank ATM machines, which distribute both Rubles and Dollars, located on the Embassy grounds.

¶13. Further information on traveling and safety within the Russian federation is available at the State Department's Consular Affairs web site: <http://travel.state.gov/russia.html>. Official travelers are also encouraged to request up-to-date security related information through their Embassy Control Officer. This information is available on the DOS OPENNET's Embassy Moscow website (RSO link).

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